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TRIFA, Viorel

Viorel Trifa, who is better known as Bishop Valerian Trifa, has been a liaison official in the Rumanian Orthodox Church in the US since 1951.

Once officially the "chief of the Fascist students" in Rumania and a member of the pro-Nazi "Iron Guard," Trifa reportedly instigated an armed insurrection against the Rumanian Jews in January 1941. During a political meeting at the student union in Bucharest, Trifa condemned so-called "Judea-British imperialism" in a speech that was followed by open rebellion and the massacre of a large number of Jews. Since Trifa's actions violated the directives of the government of Prime Minister Antonescu, which although pro-Nazi had protected the Jewish people from persecution, Trifa was forced to leave the country. He was later sentenced to life imprisonment in absentia by the Rumanian government.

In 1950 Trifa arrived in the US as a displaced person, and in July 1951, despite limited theological training, he was elected Archbishop of the Rumanian Orthodox Church in the US. Trifa was subjected to bad publicity in both the American and Rumanian presses in May 1955 when he was invited, as Bishop of the Rumanian Church in Cleveland, to deliver the prayer at the opening session of the US Senate. In 1963 Trifa was identified as a leader of one faction of the Rumanian Orthodox Church in the US.

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